

**THE LIGHT OF
THY COUNTENANCE
GREEK CATHOLICS
IN HUNGARY**

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III.1.1 The Status of the Greek Catholics in the 18th Century

Tamás Véghseő

The instruction of the Congregation *Propaganda Fide* issued in 1718, reaffirming the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Eger over the Greek Catholics,¹ would define the limited and increasingly diminishing framework in which Byzantine-rite Catholics having entered into union with Rome were able to work to improve their own ecclesiastical life. This period and subjection to Eger are characterised by a sense of duality. It is undeniable that, in the decades following the conclusion of the Union of Uzhhorod (*Ungvár*), approximating the quality of Greek Catholic ecclesiastical life to Tridentine norms seen as a standard at the time was not successful. Thus, 'guardianship', considered necessary and indispensable by the Roman Catholic bishops and their advisers starting from Cardinal Lipót Kollonich,² was to some extent justifiable. At the same time, the measures taken in conjunction with the Greek Catholics in Eger in a number of instances failed to promote integration but rather perpetuated or literally exacerbated backward conditions. Through the policies of Charles III and subsequently of Maria Theresa, the central authority, with a vested interest in the integration of Greek Catholics, initially strove to guide the respective processes in a favourable direction as a 'benevolent catalyst' and then, recognising the untenability of the system of the 'rite-vicariate', it irrevocably committed itself to the autonomy of the Greek Catholic Church.

In addition to his letters-patent³ issued in 1720, Charles III fostered the development of Greek Catholic ecclesiastical life by creating a ministers' fund (*cassa parochorum*) (1733) and by extending it to the Greek Catholics. A prerequisite for the determination of the complementary benefits paid by the state to ensure the sustenance of ministers (*congrua*) was a survey of real income conditions. This task was completed by the successors of Bishop Bizánczy – Simon Olsavszky

(1733–1737), György Blazsovsky (1738–1743) and Mánuel Olsavszky (1743–1767) – through censuses conducted in several phases as of 1737.⁴

Of the Byzantine-rite vicars listed, particularly prominent was Bishop Mánuel Olsavszky, who, during his nearly a quarter-century long tenure, made significant and enduring initiatives in a number of areas of ecclesiastical life and led the last stage of the struggle for liberation from Eger.

Bishop Olsavszky was one of the Greek Catholic priests who, raised in the Seminary of Trnava (*Nagyszombat*), constituted the new, 'Tridentine-compatible' elite of the Eparchy of Mukacheve (*Munkács*).⁵ As a deputy, he assisted his brother, Bishop Simon Olsavszky, as well as his successor, György Blazsovsky. As early as one year after his appointment, he founded a school in Mukacheve, making an attempt at training priests, cantors and school masters. In 1746, he published a Latin course-book with basic catechetical knowledge in Latin and Church Slavonic.⁶ He also attempted to create a printing press equipped with Slavic font as well in an effort to mitigate the shortage of liturgical books in his Eparchy. This undertaking of his did not succeed though.⁷ Between 1750 and 1752, he conducted canonical visitations⁸ in his vast diocese, concluding with the repeated issuance of an eparchial book of rules on the administration of the Sacraments and the conduct of the clergy in 1756.⁹ He completed the construction of the church in Máriapócs commenced by Bishop Bizánczy but subsequently interrupted, and – overcoming the objections of Barkóczy, Bishop of Eger, as well as of the Conventual Franciscans in Nyírbátor – he entrusted the supervision of the pilgrimage site to Basilian monks (Picture 1).¹⁰ In Mukacheve, he embarked on an episcopal palace building project after, on the initiative of the Basilians, he was to leave the Monastery of

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¹ Hodinka, 1909, 541–542.

² On the ideas of the Jesuit advisers, see: Véghseő, Tamás. Jezsuiták és görögkatolikusok Északkelet-Magyarországon a 17. század második felében, in: Szabó, Irén (szerk.). *Katolikus megújulás Északkelet-Magyarországon: Művelődéstörténeti konferencia a jezsuita rend sárospataki megletelepedésének 350. évfordulója alkalmából*, Sárospatak, 2014, 214–226.

³ Cf. the author's previous paper in the present volume.

⁴ On this subject, see: Véghseő – Terdik, 2015.

⁵ On his activities, see: Lacko, 1961 and Udvari, 1994, 180–187.

⁶ *Elementa puerilis institutionis in lingua latina*, (facsimile edited by István Udvari), Nyíregyháza, 1999.

⁷ Hodinka, 1909, 813.

⁸ For the relevant protocols, see: Véghseő – Terdik – Simon – Majchrics – Földvári – Lágler, 2015.

⁹ Udvari, 1994, 181–187.

¹⁰ Puskás, 1995, 172–175; Terdik, 2014a, 35–37.



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Mukacheve-Chernecha Hora (*Munkács-Csernekhegy*), the traditional seat of the Bishops of Mukacheve.¹¹ Upon Maria Theresa's instruction, he visited the Romanian Greek Catholic communities of Transylvania in 1746 and, subsequently, in 1761 and countered the challenge posed by Serbian itinerant monks attacking the union. A summary of his activities in Transylvania was a collection of his exhortatory speeches for upholding the union, published in several languages.¹²

The greatest trial of his zealous episcopal service, as well as the hardest battle of his life, was the representation of the interests of the Greek Catholics vis-à-vis the hierarchs of Eger, Bishops Ferenc Barkóczy (1744–1761) and Károly Eszterházy (1762–1799).

The most spectacular of the policies of the two Bishops of Eger is one of Ferenc Barkóczy's instructions. On 8 May 1747, the Bishop of Eger ordered

that the Greek Catholic priests become the chaplains of the territorially competent Roman Catholic priests.¹³ In other words, local Latin-rite parish priests were to supervise the activities of Greek Catholic priests as the Bishop of Eger supervised the activities of the Bishop of Mukacheve relegated to the status of 'rite-vicar'. By taking this measure, Bishop Barkóczy proclaimed Greek Catholics second-rate Catholics even officially, naturally prompting protest and ushering in yet another phase in the conflict referred to above.

Following the introduction of the ordinance, Bishop Barkóczy began inspecting the Greek Catholic clergy by means of canonical visitations. It is widely known that he was by no means pleased with the first-hand experience he gained during his tour. He even recorded his negative impressions in the protocol and, as early as July 1748 – according to contemporary sources, under rather humiliating circumstances and

¹¹ Terdik, 2014a, 25–27.

¹² In Hungarian: *A szeretet kötele az az a nap-keleti és nap-nyugati anya szent egy-ház-között-való egygyességről lőtt beszéd*, Péts, [1765]. In Latin: *Sermo de sacra occidentalem inter, orientalem Ecclesiam unione...* Tyrnaviae 1761. Basilovits, 1799, III, 48–79.

¹³ Pekar, 1992, 51.

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demanding another oath of allegiance – he obliged Mánuel Olsavszky, Bishop of Mukacheve, to rectify what he had identified as errors.¹⁴

A look at the list of conditions and practices perceived as unacceptable by the Bishop of Eger makes it obvious that some of these were real problems of ecclesiastical discipline, while others merely reflected lack of understanding of the differing praxis of the Byzantine-rite Church and the resultant disapproval thereof. It is indisputable that the educational background of the Greek Catholic clergy still failed to fully align with the expectations of the time. It is also indubitable that the widespread practice of widowed priests remarrying was not in compliance with the regulations, either. Furthermore, the practice that the Greek Catholics did not observe the feasts of the Latin Church (but, as the Bishop put it: 'they would idle away in their homes instead'), as well as the fact that they did not commemorate the hierarch, i.e. the Bishop of Eger, in the liturgy also contravened the regulations contained in the unequivocal instruction of the Congregation of Propaganda issued in 1718.

In contrast with these, it would, however, be hard to classify reproaches that were clearly motivated by a rejection of the traditions of the Byzantine Rite as justifiable objections. Such an example would be infant communion, which the Bishop encountered primarily in Szatmár County and which he proceeded to prohibit. It was also with puzzlement that he commented on the rite of the *zeon*, involving the priest admixing a few drops of hot water to the Holy Blood, uttering the following words: 'The fervour of faith, full of the Holy Spirit.' It would be equally difficult to justify the Bishop's reproof about the Greek Catholic priests not knowing and not reciting the *Angelus* (at the ringing of the bells, while kneeling) as was prescribed in Hungary by a court synod from 1307. He also blamed Greek Catholics for endeavouring to ensure the presence of seven priests at the administration of the Unction of the Sick and – in case this was not possible – for having the priest(s) present say the prayers on behalf of all seven priests.

To redress the perceived or real irregularities of Greek Catholic ecclesiastical life, Bishop Barkóczy

compiled a set of instructions reflecting his conviction that, since the standards of the praxis of the Greek Catholics were still far from the Tridentine norms and the criteria for a modern confession, control over them was to be made tighter. Letting them go on their way would sooner or later lead to autonomous development in matters of faith, thus posing a threat to the union itself. At last, at Maria Theresa's command, the Instruction was not promulgated.¹⁵ The Monarch also ordered that the Council of the Governor-General monitor how the conflict would unfold.¹⁶ Simultaneously, by way of preparing a resolution, the training of Greek Catholic priests started in Eger with her support. Although, as has been mentioned above, in 1744, Bishop Olsavszky had also established a school in Mukacheve, where even ordained priests were educated, it was not a seminary. As Vicar to the Bishop of Eger without revenues of his own, he could have no chance to accomplish that. From 1754, assisted by an annual budget of 1200 forints provided by Maria Theresa, six Greek Catholic ordinands could study under the guidance of a rite professor.¹⁷ Given that, in this period, five- to six-hundred Greek Catholic priests operated in the region, training in Eger was in itself inadequate to eliminate the deficiencies of priest education. At the same time, alongside the training opportunity at the University of Trnava offered to talented Greek Catholic young men from parishes of the Szepesség, scholarships in Eger guaranteed a framework at least for the education of the Greek Catholic leading elite.¹⁸

In exploring the reasons behind the restrictive measures enacted by the Bishops of Eger, first and foremost, statistical data from the region must be scrutinised. In the mid-18th century, 1129 settlements inhabited by Greek Catholics were under the curtailed jurisdiction of the Byzantine-Rite Vicar of Mukacheve. Only 453, i.e. approx. 40%, of these were purely Greek Catholic. 676, i.e. 60%, were denominationally mixed locations, with Greek Catholic living side by side with Roman Catholics and/or with one or both of the two Protestant denominations.¹⁹ In villages with mixed populations, the future of individual denominations was

¹⁴ Дулишкович, Иван. *Исторические черты Угро-Русских*, III, Ungvár, 1877, 137–149.

¹⁵ The Instruction was published: Véghseő, Tamás. *Barkóczy Ferenc egri püspök kiadatlan instrukciója az Egri Egyházmegye területén élő görögkatolikusok számára (1749)*, Nyíregyháza 2012.

¹⁶ Hodinka, 1909, 607.

¹⁷ For more detail, see: Földvári, Sándor. Eger szerepe a kárpátaljai ruszin, görög katolikus kultúrában, in: Beke, Margit – Bárdos, István (Eds.). *Magyarok Kelet és Nyugat metszéspontján: A nemzetközi történetészkonferencia előadásai*, Esztergom, 1994, 297–308.

¹⁸ Véghseő, 2013, 50.

¹⁹ Šoltés, 2010, 235.

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largely dependent on the priest residing locally, who would follow his parishioners from birth to death and would exert a decisive influence on mixed marriages, as well as on the confessional affiliation of the children born from such. In this area, of the denominations found in the region, no doubt Roman Catholics fared the worst. Bishop Barkóczy himself admitted on several occasions that, in his diocese, there were three or four Greek Catholic priests to one Latin-rite priest. In 1745, there were as few as 244 Latin-rite parish priests and 17 chaplains in the Diocese of Eger, and, one county (Máramaros) had not a single Roman Catholic priest living there.²⁰ By contrast, the number of Greek Catholic priests was in excess of 800 in the same period. Trends at the time indicated that the number of villages with Greek Catholics was bound to increase even further, primarily thanks to southward migration. From the perspective of Latin-rite Catholicism, it must also have appeared to be a worrisome phenomenon that originally Roman Catholic churches were transferred to use by the Greek Catholics in places where the indigenous population had partially or completely vanished owing to epidemics, and Greek Catholic inhabitants had taken their place. The number of Greek Catholic parishes in the Szepesség doubled within a short time.²¹

Thus, measures associated with the names of Bishops of Eger, which were felt to be severely restrictive from the point of view of the Greek Catholics, primarily need to be interpreted in the context of denominational expansion and reduction. For the Bishops of Eger, the possibility of demographic changes, i.e. the growing number of Greek Catholics, altering the ratio of denominations in their diocese materialised as a realistic threat. Therefore, they sought to integrate Greek Catholic communities into the local Catholic Church to the greatest possible extent and to maintain the strictest possible control over them.

By the 1760s, conflicts stemming from the opposition between the Bishop of Eger and the Greek Catholics had totally undermined relations between the two denominations, and, in 1765, even a schismatic

movement aiming to dissolve the union was launched in Hajdúdorog, the largest parish in the Eparchy of Mukacheve.²² Subjection to the Roman Catholic hierarchy and its consequences meant such a trauma to some Greek Catholics that they even considered being under the jurisdiction of the Serbian Metropolitan of Sremski Karlovci (*Karlóca*) more tolerable by comparison. Although the schismatic movement of Hajdúdorog would soon die away, it became straightforward that the resolution of the problem could not be deferred. Maria Theresa took the necessary steps in relation to the Holy See, while, having enlisted the support of János Bradács, appointed Apostolic Vicar in 1768,²³ as well as of the clergy, András Bacsinszky, an outstanding Greek Catholic ecclesiastical personality of the period,²⁴ informed the Empress of the *status quo*. In the autumn of 1769, a delegation headed by Bacsinszky left for Vienna in order to apprise the Court of the humiliating reception that Károly Eszterházy, Bishop of Eger, had given to Bishop János Bradács and his entourage – actually not for the first time.²⁵ Following prolonged negotiations and diplomatic skirmishes, the issue of the establishment of the Eparchy was finally settled in 1771, when, with the approval of the Holy See, Maria Theresa took action to effect its canonical establishment.²⁶ The Bishop of the Eparchy was János Bradács, who passed away as early as 1772 though. Subsequently, András Bacsinszky was appointed. It was during his nearly four-decade long episcopacy that the ecclesiastical and social integration of the Greek Catholics was achieved (Picture 2).

Prior to the presentation of the details of András Bacsinszky's episcopacy, it is well worth remembering an important characteristic of his Hajdúdorog years that would be of significance in terms of the process of Greek Catholic integration as well. In the years he spent in Hajdúdorog, Bacsinszky fully adapted to the vernacular environment he was surrounded by. He kept parish records in the Church Slavonic language and corresponded with the faithful, the town authorities and the clergy of Szabolcs in Hungarian, with the county authorities in Latin and with the eparchial authorities in

²⁰ Sugár, István. *Az egri püspökök története*, Budapest, 1984, 184.

²¹ Šoltés, 2010, 238.

²² For more detail, see: Janka, 2014.

²³ On Bradács, see: Udvari, 1994, 187–190.

²⁴ On Bacsinszky, see: Véghseő, 2014.

²⁵ Véghseő, 2013, 52–53.

²⁶ For more detail, see: Janka, György. A munkácsi egyházmegye felállítása, *Athanasiana*, 4(1997), 57–81. Alexander Baran (coll.). *Monumenta Ucrainae Historica*, XIII, *De processibus canonicis Ecclesiae Catholicae Ucrainorum in Transcarpathia*, Roma, 1973. Vanyó, Tihmér Aladár. *A bécsi pápai követség levéltárának iratai Magyarországról, 1611–1786*, Budapest, 1986, 107–113.

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Ruthenian. He would retain this linguistic syncretism as bishop as well and would be even supportive of the Hungarian liturgical translations made at the time.²⁷ This speaks of a general sense of openness, manifest in appreciation and respect for other languages and cultures. Although a faithful child of his Rusyn people intending to develop its culture, he did not approach other languages with hostility or see them as a potential menace but discovered additional manifestations of a shared heritage in them and acknowledge their role in cultural mediation.²⁸

A few months after Bacsinszky's appointment as bishop,²⁹ Maria Theresa called Hungarian's Byzantine-rite Catholic bishops to Vienna for a meeting of rather great import.³⁰ In different eparchies, different legal customs and disciplinary regulations were in force, a situation that appeared to be in need of change. Maria Theresa's desire was that the Greek Catholic bishops should jointly select the ecclesiastical books to be printed, determine their language and uniformise disputed liturgical texts. The bishops holding talks in the Croatian College of Vienna also needed to decide on the number of feasts as – for economic and social reasons – the Queen wished to maximise it at sixteen. Following long debates on this matter, the bishops asked the Monarch to mandate a reduction of feast days in relation to the Orthodox as well. An important point on the agenda of the discussions was the improvement of the clergy's living conditions. For the hierarchs, the sole resolution of the issue seemed to be the enforcement of the royal letters-patent issued for uniate priests. These placed the Greek Catholic clergy on a par with Latin-rite priests. The bishops made concrete propositions to the Queen to have presbyteries built, arrange for parochial lands providing for the sustenance of the clergy to be staked out everywhere, set the amount of priests' emoluments to be provided by the faithful and ensure the livelihood of priests from state funds if needs be. They were resolved to encourage counties and landowners to create a Greek Catholic school system. From the point of view of social perception, they also deemed it important to decree that, in official documents, the Eastern Christians united with Rome be called not Greek-rite Uniates but Greek-rite Catholics and,



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likewise, their priests not *popes* but ministers or parish priests. The bishops also raised their voice against the popular missions of Roman Catholic monks organised in Greek Catholic communities with the aim of winning over the Byzantine-rite Catholic faithful to the Latin Rite. They requested the Queen to exhort the Latin hierarchs to respect Greek Catholics.

Having listened to the position of the Hungarian Chancellery, Maria Theresa approved the resolutions of the synod of 28 June 1773 and issued an instruction to address the problems exposed at the convocation.

The Queen creating a chapter of seven on 12 July 1776 was integral to the development of the Eparchy of Mukacheve.³¹ She appointed the first canons and

²⁷ Nyírán, 2014.

²⁸ For more detail, see: Udvari, 1994, 196–201; Udvari, 1997, 134–160.

²⁹ Baán, István. Bacsinszky András munkácsi püspökké való kinevezése, in: Végheő, Tamás (Ed.). *Bacsinszky András munkácsi püspök: A Bacsinszky András munkácsi püspök halálának 200. évfordulóján rendezett konferencia tanulmányai*, Nyíregyháza, 2014, 61–84.

³⁰ Sources on the Viennese Synod of Bishops: Lacko, 1975.

³¹ The statutes of the Chapter were published in: Papp, György. *A munkácsi egyházmegye székeskáptalanjának statutumai*, Ungvár, 1942.

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provided for their remuneration. As the Bishops of Mukacheve had no estates but only two unsteady sources of revenue at their disposal – the *cathedraticum*, i.e. the small sum of money paid by priests or parishes to the Bishop annually and the duty payable for ordinations – in her deed of gift from 23 October 1776, Maria Theresa donated the Abbey of Tapolca to the Bishopric of Mukacheve. András Bacsinszky was the first Hungarian Greek Catholic bishop to become a member of the House of Magnates and a true inner privy counsellor.³² As a member of the House of Magnates, he attended the Diets of 1790–1791, 1792 and 1796, where he had the opportunity to be acquainted with the basic principles of the national movement evolving at the time so that he might adapt those to promote the prosperity of his Rusyn people.

In Bacsinszky's time, the Bishopric of Mukacheve comprising thirteen counties had 729 parishes with just as many priests operating in the territories of sixty deaneries.³³ To facilitate the governance of the Eparchy, in addition to the existing Szabolcs County Vicariate, the Bishop established the External Vicariates of Szatmár/Sătmar (1776) and Košice (Kassa) (1787).

The seat of the Bishopric was in the city of Mukacheve until 1778 and subsequently in Uzhhorod, where the episcopate received the building of the dissolved Jesuit Order.³⁴

By moving the Episcopal See to Uzhhorod, the Seminary was also accommodated there (Picture 3). The training programme was extended to four years. Apart from Mukacheve and Uzhhorod, clerics from the Eparchy of Mukacheve also studied in Trnava, Eger, Vienna, Pest and Lviv in the 18th century. In one of his circulars from 1805, Bishop Bacsinszky noted that 120 clerics from the Eparchy of Mukacheve studied in Uzhhorod, Trnava, Eger and Pest through state financing. He would address the issue of priest training so close to his heart in several of his circulars. As the chief prerequisite for admission, he specified knowledge of the Church Slavonic language and familiarity with ecclesiastical singing. Bacsinszky pointed out to the addressees that it would be doing a disservice to the liturgical language, education in the mother tongue and the 'Russian rite' if, following their



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secondary-level Latin studies, young men were to continue their training at Latin (Roman Catholic) seminaries. He ordered that, prior to the entrance examination, parish priests should teach their sons their paternal language, religion and lore and reinforce these in them' (translated from the Hungarian original). Bacsinszky also prescribed that young men attending Latin schools in preparation for the priestly vocation take an examination in the 'Ruthenian subjects' during school holiday.³⁵

The Bishop laid great emphasis on cantor training as well. For the Greek Catholic villages, school masters and cantors were trained at the Carei (*Nagykároly*) school, as well as at the monastery schools of Krasny Brod (*Krasznibrod*), Bukovce (*Bukóc*), Mukacheve and Máriapócs. Data from the final third of the century also suggest that cantor training took place at the seats of deaneries, including Hajdúdorog, in Rusyn and Romanian. The question of Greek Catholic school-master training would only be resolved by the establishment of the training centre in

³² Forgó, András. Batthyány József esztergomi érsek szerepe a görögkatolikus egyházi országgyűlési részvételében, *Athanasiana*, 36(2013), 69–81.

³³ Data on the Eparchy of Mukacheve from the years 1792 and 1806: Bendász–Koi, 1994; Udvari, 1990.

³⁴ On the conversion in more detail, see: Terdik, 2014a, 76–128; on Bacsinszky's episcopal representation: Puskás, 2014.

³⁵ Udvari, 2001, 76. Also: Vasil, 2014.

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Uzhhorod in 1793, with education provided in the contemporary Rusyn literary language.³⁶

The Bishop also saw the development of the lowest level of education, the network of elementary schools, as important. The curriculum for Catholic elementary schools had been determined over two centuries earlier by the 1560 Trnava Regulations: the text of the catechism, reading, writing and singing. In light of the circulars, essentially the same is evident in relation to Rusyn elementary schools as well. As the most important task of elementary schools, however, Bacsinszky identified the teaching of Christian subjects and catechising. In his circulars, he mandated catechesis for children of both sexes from six to fourteen years of age. Owing to the massive shortage of books, this form of instruction was performed without books in most places. The absence of catechisms could only be mitigated by the work of János Kutka published in Buda in 1801. (He also authored a Rusyn primer in 1799). Purchasing Kutka's Catechism was made compulsory for every parish by Bacsinszky in a separate circular. Young people were required to take an examination on the material covered in the Catechism before marriage. As for cantors, he obliged them to learn the entire contents of the book by heart, for 'whoever wishes to teach others, ought to be learned himself, too' (translated from the Hungarian original).³⁷

On the initiative of the Director of the University Press, in 1806, the Council of the Governor-General solicited Bacsinszky for his opinion as to what books he required to be published for the elementary schools of his Eparchy and what letters were to be used in printing. Bacsinszky submitted a claim for the printing of nearly a dozen books. Aside from textbooks needed for the acquisition of good morals, Christian teachings and liturgical knowledge, he considered it necessary to print a book on arithmetic, as well as one that discussed the duties of a good citizen. Similarly to biblical stories, he intended to disseminate the latter two in the vernacular. His initiatives also included the five-volume *Holy Bible* in the Rusyn language published by the University Press of Buda in 1804 and 1805. Its text was edited by Gergely Tarkovics, the future Bishop of Prešov (*Eperjes*).³⁸

The initiatives and spectacular accomplishments of the Bacsinszky Era concluded a protracted

integration process lasting one and a half centuries and periodically stalling completely before gathering momentum again. From Maria Theresa's time, the engine of the process was clearly the Viennese Court, with the Greek Catholics as local allies of the central state authorities assigned a special role in its ecclesiastical and social policies.

With the Bishop's death in 1809, the Bacsinszky Era ends in the Hungarian Reform Era. The flaring up of Hungarian national sentiments, the sacralisation of the 'nation' and the resultant compulsion to accommodate brought new opportunities and new challenges for Hungarian Greek Catholics and the Greek Catholics of Hungary.

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³⁶ Udvari, 2001, 77.

³⁷ Udvari, 2001, 78-81.

³⁸ Kocsis, 2014. On Bishop Bacsinszky's library, see: Véghseő, 2016.